

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 20273 01 OF 02 121625Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 EPA-01 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EPG-02 FAA-00 L-03
H-01 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSC-05
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R 121611Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5576
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 20273

E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAIR, US, UK, FR
SUBJECT: CONCORDE

REF: PARIS 19976

1. DESPITE THE RELATIVELY MODERATE INITIAL REACTION OF FRENCH MEDIA (REFTEL), THE NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY'S DECISION OF LAST WEEK POSTPONING YET AGAIN ANY FINAL DECISION ON CONCORDE IS BEGINNING TO PROVOKE SOME TOUGH TALK IN FRANCE. REFTEL REPORTED RPR DEPUTY LUCIEN NEUWIRTH'S DEMAND THAT FLIGHTS FROM NEW YORK (OF US CARRIERS OBVIOUSLY AND NOT AIR FRANCE) BE SUSPENDED AS A RETALIATORY MEASURE. THE PCF HAS NOW CHIMED IN. IN A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE JUNE 9 UNDER THE HEADING "BOEING GO HOME," L'HUMANITE QUOTES PCF POLITBURO MEMBER CLAUDE POPEREN AS SAYING THAT GOF SHOULD ACT TO PREVENT US CARRIER AIRCRAFT FROM OPERATING TO FRENCH AIRPORTS. POPEREN CALLED NEW YORK
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PAGE 02 PARIS 20273 01 OF 02 121625Z

DECISION "UNJUSTIFIED AND INTOLERABLE," AIMED AT KILLING OFF CONCORDE SO THAT US COULD THEN DEVELOP A SECOND GENERATION SST. BLAME FOR THIS SITUATION, HE SAID, LAY WITH GOF AND EX-PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC.

2. PCF OFFICIAL (WHOSE NAME WE DIDN'T CATCH

BUT PERHAPS IT WAS POPEREN) SAID IN RADIO
INTERVIEW JUNE 8 THAT RETALIATORY MEASURES WOULD
BE TAKEN. WHEN PRESSED FOR DETAILS HE SAID
THESE WOULD BECOME EVIDENT "IN A FEW DAYS."

3. THUS FAR PCF ACTION IS LIMITED TO PETITIONS
WHICH L'HUMANITE SAYS ARE BEING ADDRESSED TO GOF
AND, AS WE KNOW, ALSO TO EMBASSY. SOME FIFTEEN
TELEGRAMS PROTESTING NEW YORK ACTION HAVE THUS
FAR BEEN SENT TO EMBASSY FROM VARIOUS COMMUNIST
GROUPS. L'HUMANITE REPORTS BRIEFLY VISIT TO
EMBASSY JULY 11 BY FOUR MEMBER COMMUNIST DELEGATION
FROM TOWN OF VIGNEUX NEAR PARIS (THEY WERE
RECEIVED BY CAA) TO DELIVER PROTEST MESSAGE.
L'HUMANITE ARTICLE SAYS THAT CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT
OF CONCORDE WILL BE PURSUED AND WILL TAKE "MULTIPLE
FORMS." NO DETAILS WERE PROVIDED.

4. TOULOUSE-BASED COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF
CONCORDE HAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, REACTED HARSHLY
TO PORT AUTHORITY ACTION. IN STATEMENT TO PRESS
COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THAT "TIME HAS COME
TO POISON, ON EVERY OCCASION AND BY EVERY MEANS,
OUR RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, WHICH
NO LONGER HAVE ANYTHING IN COMMON WITH THE
FRIENDSHIP THAT WAS SO GENEROUSLY CELEBRATED
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PAGE 03 PARIS 20273 01 OF 02 121625Z

FOR THE BICENTENNIAL."

5. COMMENT: THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME WE
HAVE HEARD DEMANDS FOR RETALIATORY ACTION AGAINST
US BECAUSE OF FRENCH INABILITY SECURE NEW YORK
LANDING RIGHTS FOR CONCORDE, BUT THUS FAR NONE
OF THE THREATS HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT. PATIENCE
HAS ITS LIMITS, HOWEVER, AND THAT OF THE
FRENCH HAS CERTAINLY BEEN SORELY TRIED
IN THE CONCORDE AFFAIR. US CARRIER OPERATIONS
IN FRANCE SEEM A NATURAL TARGET FOR THIS KIND
OF VIGILANTE JUSTICE. WHILE WE DO NOT SEE THE
GOF INITIATING SUCH ACTION IN FLAGRANT VIOLATION
OF US-FRANCE BILATERAL, IT IS CERTAINLY WITHIN
THE PCF'S POWER THROUGH ITS CONTROL OF THE CGT
TO BRING ABOUT A BOYCOTT OF SERVICING OF US
CARRIER AIRCRAFT BY CGT GROUND HANDLERS AT
FRENCH AIRPORTS, AND IN VIEW OF THE EMOTIONAL
COMMITMENT CUTTING ACROSS PARTY LINES IN FRANCE

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PAGE 01 PARIS 20273 02 OF 02 121629Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 20273

IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT
NON-COMMUNIST TRADE UNIONS WOULD JOIN THE
MOVEMENT OUT OF SOLIDARITY. THE GOF MIGHT NOT
BE DISPLEASED AT THIS INITIATIVE, EVEN IF TAKEN
BY THE PCF/CGT, FOR THE OGF COULD THEN SAY TO
US, "WE TOLD YOU SO." THE GOF WOULD BE UNLIKELY
TO INTERVENE EVEN IF IT COULD, AND SINCE BOYCOTT
WOULD BE IN THE FORM OF A WORK STOPPAGE THERE
WOULD PRESUMABLY BE LITTLE THAT THE USG COULD
DO ABOUT IT EITHER.

6. WE HAVE ALERTED US CARRIER REPS AND REMAIN
IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THEM. WE SUSPECT THAT TODAY,
JULY 12, WHEN HEARINGS RESUME IN THE DISTRICT
COURT, WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT BEARING ON WHAT
MAY DEVELOP IN THE DAYS TO COME. SOME OF THE
FRENCH NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN REPORTING AS IF THERE
IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT JUDGE POLLACK MAY HAND
DOWN ON THAT SAME DAY HIS DECISION ON WHETHER
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PAGE 02 PARIS 20273 02 OF 02 121629Z

THE PORT AUTHORITY HAS BEEN "UNREASONABLE" IN ITS
ATTITUDE TOWARD CONCORDE. IF, HOWEVER, JUDGE
POLLACK SCHEDULES FURTHER HEARINGS OR TAKES
THE MATTER UNDER ADVISEMENT TO ISSUE HIS DECISION
ONLY IN ANOTHER WEEK OR MORE, IT COULD WELL
BE THAT SOME "RETALIATORY" ACTION WOULD TAKE
FORM HERE, IF ONLY IN THE NAIVE BELIEF THAT THIS
COULD PERHAPS INFLUENCE THE DECISION OF THE
DISTRICT COURT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THOUGH
THIS SEEMS UNLIKELY, JUDGE POLLACK WERE TO
SUSTAIN THE PORT AUTHORITY BY RULING THAT IT
HAS NOT ACTED IN "UNREASONABLE" FASHION, THEN THE
ONLY THING LEFT FOR US TO DO WILL BE TO BATTEN
DOWN THE HATCHES AND WAIT FOR THE STORM TO BREAK
HERE IN FRANCE.
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Message Attributes

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